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The Antiochus Cylinder, Babylonian scholarship and Seleucid imperial ideology

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Abstract

With few surviving Greek sources from Hellenistic Babylonia, we are often ill-informed about the details of Seleucid imperialism ‘on the ground’ – in particular, about the Seleucids’ relationship with the Babylonian priestly elites and Babylonian cult and culture. This makes the cuneiform sources all the more important. One of the most intriguing is the ‘Antiochus (or Borsippa) Cylinder’, a clay cylinder in the form of a traditional Mesopotamian royal inscription recording Antiochus I’s restoration of a Babylonian temple.

Although the Cylinder was previously seen as evidence for the adoption of Babylonian cultural forms by the Seleucids, recent readings have analysed it as a product of interaction between Babylonian tradition and Seleucid imperial ideology. Yet the accuracy of such readings crucially depends on situating the Cylinder correctly within its cultural context. Here the inscription is reassessed with close reference to earlier and contemporary Mesopotamian sources. While evidence for ‘copy-and-paste’ redaction imposes significant methodological constraints on textual analysis, certain elements of the Cylinder which are non-traditional from a Babylonian perspective can persuasively be interpreted in terms of Seleucid royal ideology. Ultimately, however, we must question the extent to which the inscription’s ideological manoeuvres are broadly ‘Babylonian’ or ‘imperial’, rather than shaped by and targeted at a specific local context.

As the sole surviving example of a Seleucid royal inscription in cuneiform, the Antiochus Cylinder from the Babylonian city of Borsippa has become a key historical source for Classicists and Assyriologists alike. Discovered in the temple of the city’s patron deity Nabû, the Ezida, this clay cylinder bears an Akkadian inscription recording Antiochus I’s restoration of that temple. This exceptional document is rightly regarded as an important piece of evidence for any discussion of Seleucid patronage of Babylonian culture.¹ Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, whose republication of the Cylinder in 1991 helped to establish it in the mainstream of Hellenistic historiography, situated it within the rich tradition of Mesopotamian royal building inscriptions, stressing the Seleucids’ adoption of Babylonian cultural forms, as well as identifying two unusual features which might reflect a specifically Seleucid imperial style.² Some years on, several new studies have further questioned the Cylinder’s traditionalism, reading it as a product of interaction between Babylonian culture and Seleucid imperial ideology. Johannes Haubold, Rolf Strootman and Paul Kosmin all argue that the Cylinder selects from and reformulates Babylonian tradition in line with Seleucid imperial image-making.³ As Haubold puts it, ‘Antiochus ... has used the traditional building blocks of the Neo-Babylonian royal inscription to create a distinctive new

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narrative'.⁴

In order to determine the Cylinder's implications for our understanding of Seleucid relations with Babylonian culture, it is crucial to situate this inscription accurately within its intellectual and cultural context; only in this way is it possible to identify and analyse its traditional or non-traditional features. Here I aim to contribute to the re-opened debate by reassessing the Cylinder from the perspective of Mesopotamian royal, religious and intellectual traditions – reading it with close reference to previous Babylonian and Assyrian royal building inscriptions, and contemporary cuneiform scholarship in Hellenistic Babylonia.

The first section establishes an important methodological consideration. I argue that although the Antiochus Cylinder is undoubtedly a key source of insight into Seleucid policy and Babylonian scholarship during the early Hellenistic period, the way in which this text, like other Mesopotamian royal inscriptions, was redacted imposes certain limitations on our ability to use it as a literary or historical source. Close verbal parallels with earlier examples of the genre and certain syntactic irregularities in the Antiochus Cylinder suggest an element of 'copy-and-paste' from earlier inscriptions. This calls into question the extent to which we may 'read into' small-scale elements of the text such as individual word choice and ordering.

With due caution, however, it is possible to analyse this inscription for insight into Babylonian scholarship, Seleucid imperial ideology and the interaction between the two; the second section of the article attempts precisely that. I examine the Cylinder as a statement of Seleucid royal piety and power, exploring its relationship with earlier Mesopotamian royal building inscriptions and Seleucid self-presentation as reflected in Greek sources. I focus on several elements of the inscription which are unusual from a Babylonian perspective and do seem to reflect the influence of a distinctively Seleucid ideology. The combination of these elements with more traditional content and phrasing supports recent readings of the Cylinder as a product of interaction between Babylonian cultural convention and Seleucid imperial image-making. At the same time, the Cylinder's local context and its exceptionalism among our surviving sources raise the question of how much this inscription can tell us about Seleucid Babylonia or Seleucid imperial policy as a whole. The final section of the article turns explicitly to this issue, discussing the Cylinder's place within the cuneiform scholarship of Hellenistic Babylonia, and modern scholarship on the Hellenistic world. Ultimately, I shall suggest that for all its universalizing claims about Antiochus, 'king of the world ... king of the lands', the Antiochus Cylinder itself tells us more about the relations between Antiochus I and the priestly elite of the city of Borsippa than about Seleucid patronage of Babylonian cult or culture more generally, or Seleucid imperialism in a 'global' sense.

As my arguments depend on a detailed analysis of the text, this is first presented in a transliteration and translation which take account of updated readings based on collation of

the Cylinder.⁵ One significant correction from previous editions should be noted. Col. ii 14, was previously read *ina haṭ-ṭa-ka ṣi-i-ri*, ‘under your exalted sceptre’, but the cuneiform sign read as *haṭ* is in fact the similar-looking GIŠ, here used as a determinative to indicate a wooden object. The following sign must then be read with the logographic value DA instead of the phonetic value *ṭa*, so that the two signs together yield not *haṭ-ṭa*, ‘sceptre’, but ^{giš}da, Akkadian *lē’u*, ‘writing board’ – an appropriate attribute for Nabû, god of writing and scholarship. Col. ii 14-15 therefore read *ina lē’ika ṣīri / mukīn pullukku šamê u erṣeti*, ‘on your sublime writing board, which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth.’

i.1 ^man-ti-'-ku-us lugal gal-ú
 i.2 lugal dan-nu lugal šár lugal e^{ki} lugal kur.kur
 i.3 za-ni-in é.sag.íl ù é.zi.da
 i.4 ibila sag.kal ša ^msi-lu-uk-ku lugal
 i.5 ^{lu}ma-ak-ka-du-na-a-a lugal e^{ki}
 i.6 a-na-ku i-nu-ma a-na e-pé-eš₁₅
 i.7 é.sag.íl ù é.zi.da
 i.8 šà-bi ub-lam-ma sig^{hi.a}₄
 i.9 é.sag.íl ù é.zi.da
 i.10 ina ^{kur}ha-at-tì ina šu^{II}-iá el-le-ti
 i.11 i-na ì.giš ru-uš-ti al-bi-in-ma
 i.12 a-na na-de-e uš-šu ša é.sag.íl
 i.13 ù é.zi.da ub-bi-il ina ^{iti}še ud 20.kam
 i.14 mu 43.kam uš-šu ša é.zi.da
 i.15 é ki-i-ni é ^dag šá qé-reb bar.sìp^{ki}
 i.16 ad-de-e uš-ši-šu ^dag ibila ši-i-ri
 i.17 igi.gál.la dingir^{mes} muš-tar-ḫu
 i.18 ša a-na ta-na-da-a-ti
 i.19 šit-ku-nu ibila reš-tu-ú
 i.20 ša ^damar.utu i-lit-ti ^de₄-ru₆-ú-a
 i.21 šar-rat pa-ti-qát nab-ni-ti
 i.22 ḫa-diš nap-li-is-ma
 i.23 i-na qí-bi-ti-ka ši-ir-ti
 i.24 ša la in-nen-nu-ú qí-bit-su
 i.25 šu-um-qu-ut ma-a-ti a-a-bi-iá
 i.26 ka-šá-du ir-ni-it-ti-iá
 i.27 ugu na-ki-ri ú-šu-uz-zu i-na li-i-ti
 i.28 lugal-ú-tu mi-šá-ri pa-le-e
 i.29 bu-a-ri mu.an.na^{mes} ṭu-ub šà-bi
 i.30 še-bé-e lit-tu-tu lu ši-ri-ik-ti
 ii.1 lugal-ú-ti šá ^man-ti-'-ku-us
 ii.2 ù si-lu-uk-ku lugal dumu-šú
 ii.3 a-na da-ra-a-ti dumu ru-bé-e
 ii.4 ^dag ibila é.sag.íl
 ii.5 bu-kúr ^dasar-ri reš-tu-ú
 ii.6 i-lit-ti ^de₄-ru₆-ú-a šar-rat
 ii.7 a-na é.zi.da é ki-i-ni
 ii.8 é ^da-nu-ti-ka šu-bat ṭu-<ub> šà-bi-ka
 ii.9 i-na ḫi-da-a-tú ù ri-šá-a-tú
 ii.10 i-na e-re-bi-ka i-na qí-bi-ti-ka
 ii.11 kit-ti ša la uš-tam-sa-ku li-ri-ku u₄-mi-iá
 ii.12 li-mi-da mu.an.na-ti-iá
 ii.13 li-kun ^{giš}gu.za-ú-a li-il-bi-ir
 ii.14 pa-lu-ú-a i-na ^{giš}da-ka ši-i-ri
 ii.15 mu-kin pùl-lu-uk-ku¹⁹ an-e u ki-ti
 ii.16 i-na pi-i-ka el-li liš-tak-ka-nu
 ii.17 du-un-qí-iá kur.kur^{mes} ta ši-it ^dutu-ši
 ii.18 a-di e-re-eb ^dutu-ši lik-šu-du
 ii.19 šu^{II}-a-a man-da-at-ti-ši-nu lu-us-ni-iq-ma
 ii.20 a-na šuk-lu-lu é.sag.íl
 ii.21 ù é.zi.da lu-bi-il ^dag
 ii.22 ibila sag.kal a-na é.zi.da
 ii.23 é ki-i-ni i-na e-re-bi-ka
 ii.24 sig₅-ti ^man-ti-'-ku-us lugal kur.kur
 ii.25 ^msi-lu-uk-ku lugal dumu-šú
 ii.26 ^fas-ta-ar-ta-ni-ik-ku
 ii.27 ḫi-rat-su šar-ra-at
 ii.28 da-mi-iq-ti-šú-nu
 ii.29 li-iš-šá-kin i-na pi-i-ka

Antiochus, great king,
 mighty king, king of the world, king of Babylon, king of
 the lands, provider for (the temples) Esagil and Ezida,
 foremost heir of Seleucus, the king,
 the Macedonian, king of Babylon,
 am I. When⁶ my heart prompted me
 to (re)build Esagil and Ezida,
 I moulded the bricks
 of Esagil and Ezida
 in the land of Hatti (Syria) with my pure hands,
 using the finest oil, and
 for the laying of the foundations of Esagil and Ezida I
 brought them. In the month Addaru, day 20, of year 43
 (27 March 268 BC), I laid the foundations of Ezida, the
 true temple, the temple of Nabû which is in Borsippa.
 Nabû, supreme heir,
 wisest of the gods, the proud one,
 who is worthy of praise,
 firstborn son of
 Marduk, offspring of queen Erua
 who forms living creatures,
 look favourably (on me) and,
 at your supreme command,
 whose command is unalterable,⁷
 may the overthrow of my enemy's land,
 the attainment of my ambition,
 (the ability) to stand in triumph over (my) foes,
 a just rule, a prosperous reign,
 years of happiness and the full
 enjoyment of great old age be a gift
 for the kingship of Antiochus
 and king Seleucus, his son,
 forever. Son of the prince,
 Nabû, heir of Esagil,
 firstborn son of Asari (Marduk),
 offspring of queen Erua,
 upon your entry to Ezida, the true temple, temple
 of your supreme divinity, dwelling of your heart's content,
 with rejoicing and jubilation,
 at your just command,
 which cannot be annulled, may my days be long,
 my years many;
 may my throne be secure, my reign long-lasting,
 on your sublime writing board
 which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth;
 by your pure mouth may my good fortune be constantly
 established. May my hands conquer the lands from the
 rising to the setting of the sun;
 may I levy their tribute and
 bring it to perfect Esagil
 and Ezida. Nabû,
 supreme heir, upon your entry to Ezida,
 the true temple,
 may the good fortune of Antiochus, king of the lands,
 king Seleucus, his son,
 (and) Stratonice,
 his consort, the queen,
 may their good fortune
 be established by your mouth.

I. The limits of scholarship: from intertextuality to copy-and-paste

The Antiochus Cylinder has at times been subjected to very fine-mesh textual analysis, so that small details of sign usage, word choice and phrasing are treated as deliberate and meaningful choices on the part of the composer. Yet the manner in which this inscription was redacted⁸ imposes limitations on the ways in which we can analyse it. Mesopotamian royal inscriptions are generally characterized by a high degree of conservatism and a shared repertoire of fixed idioms. Certain traditional *topoi* recur again and again, and rulers often deliberately modelled their own inscriptions on those of their predecessors (which were frequently uncovered in the course of building works), sometimes borrowing entire phrases.⁹ The Antiochus Cylinder is no exception to this pattern; rather, it may be a particularly extreme example. Throughout the inscription there are indications that words and phrases have been copied from other sources.

Sometimes the suspicion of borrowing arises from unusual phrasing which can be paralleled in earlier inscriptions, especially where there is a local link. One such case is the second genealogy of Nabû (col. ii 5–6), which uses a rare spelling of Marduk's name, and the unusual word *bukru* rather than *aplu* for son. Both elements can be paralleled in an inscription of the Assyrian king Šamaš-šuma-ukīn relating to his renovation of temple storehouses in Borsippa, in which Nabû is also invoked with the phrase *bukur Marduk rēštu, ilitti Erua šarrat*.¹⁰ Although neither of the surviving copies of this inscription can be securely assigned to Borsippa, it is certain that at least one copy would have been dedicated in Ezida, where the redactor of the Antiochus inscription might have had access to it.

The strongest evidence for copying, however, comes from cases where there are not only parallels with earlier inscriptions, but also irregularities in the text where a copied motif or phrase has not been fully adapted for its new context. These irregularities provide evidence for the operation of what Martin Worthington has termed “‘cut and paste’ redaction”.¹¹ Perhaps the clearest example in the Antiochus Cylinder occurs in column i, lines 23–4. Here we find the phrase *ina qibītika širti / ša lā innennû qibītsu*, usually translated as ‘At your exalted command/ which cannot be altered.’ However, as observed by Seux, and implicitly acknowledged in Foster's translation, ‘at your sublime command, (you) whose command cannot be changed’,¹² what the Akkadian actually says is ‘at your exalted command/ whose command cannot be altered’; the second *qibītsu* does not make sense. Seux noted that the infelicitous phrasing here was ‘entraîné par le souvenir d'une tournure courante’,¹³ and indeed an examination of earlier royal inscriptions provides a clue as to what has happened. In Babylonian royal inscriptions of the earlier first millennium there are two typical, and mutually exclusive, formulae for expressing the immutability of divine command, which are as follows (elements which correspond structurally to Antiochus Cylinder col. i 23–4 are

underlined):

1) ‘at your/their (exalted/just) command, which cannot be altered’, e.g.:

ina qibītīka širti ša lā itakkara

‘At your exalted command, which cannot be changed.’¹⁴

2) ‘...god X, whose command cannot be altered’, e.g.:

ina qibīt Marduk bēli rabê ša lā innennū qibitsu

‘At the command of Marduk, the great lord, whose command is unalterable.’¹⁵

The phrasing of the Antiochus Cylinder represents a conflation of the two patterns, with the first clause of Type 1 joined erroneously to the second clause of Type 2. It appears that the scribe was drawing on older models, but that his understanding and/or recall of the examples was imperfect, leading to his confusion of the two different formulae. Interestingly, a correct version of the Type 1 formula, with a different verb, occurs a few lines later at col. ii 10–11: ‘at your just command, which cannot be annulled.’ This inconsistency, with incorrect and correct versions almost side by side, can be explained by a process of copying whole phrases from other sources without ensuring that they fitted together in their new context.

If it were based on a single case, this interpretation would remain speculative, but other irregularities in the Cylinder’s text suggest a similar procedure. A comparable disjunction comes in the second prayer to Nabû. As we will see, the Antiochus Cylinder is unusual in having three separate prayers for different members of the royal family, which seems to reflect a shift to a more dynastic focus in line with Seleucid priorities.¹⁶ Yet the adaptation of the conventional prayer structure to fit the new dynastic frame is not perfect, and in the second prayer the phraseology of the requests to Nabû has not been altered to fit their new recipients. The list of traditional desiderata at the end of column i is still expressed in the first person singular typical of Babylonian inscriptions: ‘the overthrow of the land of *my* enemy, the achievement of *my* triumphs’. Only at the beginning of column ii do we discover that these gifts are wished upon Antiochus *and* Seleucus, ‘*his* son’; the change from first to third person underscores the jarring effect of the shift from singular to plural beneficiary. Again one suspects that the scribe was using a traditional model which has been imperfectly adjusted to the new framework.

A second example in the same section is less jarring syntactically, but again, an apparently copied motif does not sit easily in its new context. With the revised reading ^{gis}da, col. ii 14–15 reads *ina lē’īka šīri / mukīn pullukku šamê u eršeti* ‘on your exalted writing board, which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth.’ Although the similarity of these two lines to a phrase in two Nebuchadnezzar inscriptions describing work on the Borsippa ziggurat has been remarked before,¹⁷ the revised reading reveals that there is in fact an exact verbal parallel. Moreover, the evocative and unusual phrase ‘which fixes the boundary of

heaven and earth’ is also used to describe Nabû’s writing board in a cylinder inscription of Nabonidus (r. 556–539 BC) which describes royal building work at Borsippa.¹⁸ The specificity of the parallels and the rarity of the phrase in other surviving texts make this a likely candidate for borrowing from an earlier inscription. The Nebuchadnezzar cylinders were found at Borsippa, and Nabonidus’ Ezida cylinder is likely to have come from there as well, making it tempting to suggest a direct link. In the parallel inscriptions, the phrase occurs in the prayer section, where Nabû is specifically asked to write or decree something on his writing board for the king, i.e. to ensure it comes to pass. In the Antiochus Cylinder, on the other hand, although the phrase is inserted into the prayer section, it seems slightly redundant in context. Depending on whether one takes the phrase as ending or beginning a sentence, there are two possible translations:

At your just command, which cannot be annulled, may my days be long, my years many;
may my throne be secure, my reign long-lasting, on your sublime writing board which
fixes the boundary of heaven and earth. (col. ii 10–14)

On your sublime writing board, which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth, by your
pure mouth, may my good fortune be constantly established. (col. ii 14–17)

The irregularity here can be explained in terms of a partial conflation between two of three different patterns of phraseology: ‘at your true command...may X be the case’; ‘write X... on your tablet’, and ‘may X ... be established by/placed in your mouth,’ as in the following examples:

ina qibītīka kītti ... lušbâ littūti

By your true command ... may I live to old age¹⁹

ina lē’īka kīni ... ibi arāku ūmīya šuṭur littūti

On your reliable writing board ... decree me length of days (i.e. long life), inscribe my old age²⁰

arāku ūmē šarrūtīya liššakin ina pīka

May long-lasting kingship for me (lit. ‘length of days of my kingship’) be established by your mouth²¹

Traditionally, only one of these phrases is used for one set of wishes in the prayer section, but in the Antiochus Cylinder, we seem to find an awkward combination of two of them. Moreover, in either translation, a specific reference to writing and the usual request for Nabû to inscribe the desiderata on his tablet are lacking, and the writing board is somewhat superfluous, sandwiched as it is between two other instruments by which Antiochus’ wishes are to be granted. There is no actual syntactic error here, but the reference to the writing board is curiously free-floating (underlined by the difficulty of establishing where it sits

syntactically), and the overall effect is one of redundancy. The slightly dissonant echoes of former inscriptions strengthen the impression that this is a composite of *topoi* and phrases from earlier sources.

Does this tracing of echoes and disjunctions have any implications beyond creating a tentative textual history or genealogy for this inscription? With regard to cuneiform scholarship in Hellenistic Babylonia, the answer is unclear. Since so far we have no other Hellenistic royal inscriptions in Akkadian to use as comparanda, it is impossible to establish whether the irregularities here indicate something about the competence or training of one or more individuals, or about the state of scholarship more generally. The disjunctions and redundancies in the Antiochus Cylinder suggest a process of composition closer to copy-and-paste than sophisticated intertextuality. This *could* fit the scenario of a scholar composing in a genre that had lapsed for centuries, relying heavily on traditional *topoi* and earlier examples. However, the use of motifs or phrases from previous inscriptions is common in this genre, and some earlier first-millennium royal inscriptions also bear the hallmarks of ‘cut-and-paste redaction’.²² Moreover, it is important to remember that in all periods there are inscriptions which contain errors and infelicities of all kinds.²³ The irregularities we find here are therefore not necessarily a sign of scribal incompetence or a dying or defunct genre or scholarly tradition – although these should be kept in mind as possibilities.²⁴

For modern scholarship on the Hellenistic world, however, the implications are clearer. The process of composition posited here for the inscription raises significant methodological issues relating to its interpretation. It is problematic to put a great deal of weight on very small-scale textual elements such as single words or signs in a text which is at least partially composed of copied chunks. Unless there is a break with traditional usage, it is difficult to argue that such elements reflect deliberate selection and carry particular ideological significance. Analyses of the text, whether linguistic, literary or historical, must take cognizance of its generic background and composite nature, and proceed accordingly. We should not stop reading the Antiochus Cylinder, but there are limits to what we can read into it.

II. ‘King of Babylon ... foremost son of king Seleucus, the Macedonian’: Babylonian tradition and Seleucid royal ideology

We do not, however, need to abandon this inscription as a simple pastiche of phrases culled from earlier sources, resistant to any kind of textual analysis; within the limits just outlined, it is still possible to examine the Cylinder for insight into Seleucid self-presentation and Seleucid-Babylonian relations. As we will see in more detail below, the Cylinder does seem

to reflect the careful selection and reshaping of elements from Babylonian and Assyrian traditions, and in some cases where a break with tradition occurs, an explanation in terms of Seleucid royal ideology seems persuasive. The difficulty lies in identifying and interpreting these cases correctly. Previous analyses have identified various aspects of the Cylinder as breaking with Babylonian or broader Mesopotamian tradition, and suggested that they reflect the influence of Seleucid royal image-making. These include: the use of the ethnic ‘Macedonian’ to describe Seleucus I;²⁵ the use of a dating formula and the reference to ‘year 43’, which has been seen as a deliberate allusion to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II;²⁶ the prominence of queen Stratonice;²⁷ and the depiction of the Seleucid royal family.²⁸ In what follows I consider, or revisit, several elements which are indeed atypical from a Babylonian perspective and are arguably best explained as the outcome of interaction between Babylonian tradition and Seleucid ideology. The discussion focuses on three features which correspond broadly to the major structural divisions of the Cylinder: the royal titulary, the representation of royal building activity, and the prayers to the god Nabû.

1. *Models of kingship: the royal titulary of Antiochus (col. i 1–6)*

In Mesopotamian royal inscriptions, the epithets given to the king, and the order in which they appear, vary between dynasties and individual rulers, and according to the length and style of the inscription. For instance, the epithets of Assyrian kings tend to focus on strength and power, whereas Babylonian rulers’ titles (and those taken by Assyrian kings in Babylonia) stress their piety and protective roles. Since particular epithets, and the patterns in which they are arranged, are characteristic of particular kings, it is possible to see later rulers aligning themselves with certain predecessors through their choice of titles, or introducing variations to suit their own royal image. The titulary, then, is potentially a key source for royal ideology, and Antiochus’ titles have been studied in this light: Kuhrt and Sherwin-White viewed them as traditionally Babylonian, and it has been suggested that a specific link is being made with Nebuchadnezzar II of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.²⁹ Close comparison with earlier royal inscriptions, however, suggests a rather different scenario.

Of the royal titles used in the Antiochus Cylinder, only two were consistently used by Neo-Babylonian rulers: ‘king of Babylon’, *šar Bābili* (lugal e^{ki}), and ‘provider for Esagil and Ezida’, *zānin Esagil u Ezida*. But both these titles were extremely common, and were taken by nearly all the Neo-Babylonian kings, as well as some Assyrian rulers of Babylonia.³⁰ Of the remaining titles, *šar mātāti*, ‘king of the lands’, first appears as a distinct title in royal inscriptions under the Achaemenid dynasty, although the similar *šar mātāti šarḫu*, ‘magnificent king of the lands’, appears in earlier Assyrian royal inscriptions;³¹ the titles

‘great king’, *šarru rabû* (lugal gal), ‘mighty king’, *šarru dannu*, and ‘king of the world’, *šar kiššati* (lugal šár) are also characteristic of Assyrian rather than Babylonian kings in the first millennium.³² These Assyrian titles are never used in the royal inscriptions of any Neo-Babylonian king, with two exceptions which serve to confirm the rule. The first is the founder of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Nabopolassar (r. 625–605 BC), who holds the title ‘mighty king’ as well as other titles of his Assyrian predecessors in his early inscriptions. Nabopolassar came from a Babylonian family whose members had served as high-ranking officials for the Assyrians,³³ and although he later took care to mask his pro-Assyrian origins, his links with the Assyrian regime help to explain his use of Assyrianizing titulature in the early years of his own reign.³⁴ The second exception is the final ruler of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, the usurper Nabonidus, who uses all three Assyrian titles in an inscription composed late in his reign (see further below). Nabonidus deliberately aligned himself with past Assyrian rulers, and his adoption of the Assyrian titulary after a period of conquests seems to be part of a claim to universal empire on the Assyrian model.³⁵ ‘Great king’ and ‘mighty king’ also occur in Cyrus’ titulary on the Cyrus Cylinder, which records Cyrus’ building work on the walls of Babylon; as Harmatta has shown, the Cyrus Cylinder corresponds to Assyrian rather than Babylonian models in its literary form, which further reinforces the Assyrian link.³⁶

The inscriptions of Assyrian kings, and the Assyrianizing inscriptions of Cyrus and Nabonidus, also present the closest overall parallels with the Antiochus Cylinder in terms of both the content and arrangement of the titulary. Table 1 compares the titulary of the Antiochus Cylinder with that from inscriptions of several earlier rulers: the Assyrian king Assurbanipal, the Neo-Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus, and the Persian king Cyrus (parallels between the Antiochus Cylinder and the other inscriptions are in bold).

Table 1

Antiochus I (r. 281–261 BC)	Assurbanipal (r. 668–627 BC) ³⁷	Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 BC) ³⁸	Nabonidus (r. 556–539 BC) ³⁹	Cyrus I (r. 539–530 BC) ⁴⁰
<i>šarru rabû</i> Great king	<i>šarru rabû</i> Great king	<i>šar Bābili</i> King of Babylon	<i>šarru rabû</i> Great king	<i>šar kiššati</i> King of the world
<i>šarru dannu</i> mighty king	<i>šarru dannu</i> mighty king	<i>rē’û kīnu</i> true shepherd	<i>šarru dannu</i> mighty king	<i>šarru rabû</i> great king
<i>šar kiššati</i> king of the world	<i>šar kiššati</i> king of the world	<i>itūt kūn libbi Marduk</i> chosen by the steadfast heart of Marduk	<i>šar kiššati</i> king of the world	<i>šarru dannu</i> mighty king
<i>šar Bābili</i> king of Babylon	<i>šar māt Aššur</i> king of Assyria	<i>iššakku šīru</i> exalted governor	<i>šar Bābili</i> king of Babylon	<i>šar Bābili</i> king of Babylon
<i>šar mātati</i> king of the lands	<i>šar kibrāt erbetti</i> king of the four quarters	<i>naram Nabium</i> beloved of Nabû	<i>šar kibrāt erbetti</i> king of the four quarters	<i>šar māt Sumeri u</i> <i>Akkadi</i> king of Sumer and Akkad
<i>zānin Esagil u</i>	<i>šar šarrāni</i>	<i>mūdā emqa</i>	<i>zānin Esagil u</i>	<i>šar kibrāt erbetti</i>

<i>Ezida</i> provider for Esagil and Ezida	king of kings	the one who knows wisdom	<i>Ezida</i> provider for Esagil and Ezida	king of the four quarters
	<i>rubû lā šanān</i> prince without compare	<i>ša ana alkakāt ilāni rabûti bašâ uznāšu</i> who understands the actions of the great gods		
	<i>ša ultu tâmti elîti adi tâmti šaplîti ibellûma</i> who rules from the upper to the lower sea	<i>šakkanakku lā āneḫa</i> untiring governor		
		<i>zānin Esagil u Ezida</i> provider for Esagil and Ezida		

Although it is clear from Greek and other Akkadian sources that Nebuchadnezzar *was* an important figure for the Seleucids,⁴¹ it turns out that here he is the weakest parallel. Antiochus' titulary includes no epithets which are particularly characteristic of this king, but only the more generic royal titles which belong to the standard Neo-Babylonian repertoire.⁴² On the other hand, Nabonidus' Ehulhul Cylinder, copies of which were found at Babylon and Sippar, and which was probably promulgated throughout Babylonia, corresponds almost exactly in the titles used *and* their ordering. This does not completely rule out the possibility that the redactor of the Antiochus Cylinder was aiming for the style of Nebuchadnezzar, or a style appropriate to later Babylonian images of this king, but in actuality Antiochus' titlature here does not primarily recall that of either Nebuchadnezzar or typical practice among rulers of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. Rather, it combines Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian titles and is closest in exact arrangement to the Assyrianizing titlature adopted late in his reign by Nabonidus, the last native ruler of Babylonia.

How are we to interpret this? Two possibilities present themselves. The first is that this mixing of traditions is due to the limitations of the scribe or his sources, with generic epithets culled from whatever material was available to create this titulary which is admittedly rather short and simple by the standards of some earlier Mesopotamian royal inscriptions. Yet the royal titulary was typically selected with great care, and the choice and configuration of titles on the Antiochus Cylinder seems more deliberate than haphazard: there is no exact parallel with an earlier ruler, and here the Assyrianizing titles are used within a Babylonian structure, whereas both the Ehulhul Cylinder of Nabonidus and the Cyrus Cylinder follow an Assyrian structure. It seems more likely, therefore, that the mixture of elements from different traditions is intentional, perhaps designed to suit a specifically Seleucid version of kingship. Indeed, the more 'Assyrian' or 'Persian' reference to the strength and power of the monarch is consonant with the image of the 'warrior king' that the Seleucids, like other Hellenistic

rulers, projected elsewhere in their empire.⁴³ Meanwhile, the use of the universalizing imperial titles ‘king of the world’ and ‘king of the lands’ may have appealed to both Antiochus and the Babylonian elite. The claims to world rule probably no longer reflected realistic Seleucid imperial ambitions at this point. Seleucus I’s treaty with the Mauryans had set a limit to eastern expansion and Antiochus had now ceded the lands west of Thrace to the Antigonids.⁴⁴ Yet the lack of geographical specification in these universalizing titles may have suited both the Babylonian elite – insofar as such vague phrases could be read as describing a Babylonian or at least Babylon-centred empire – and the Seleucids, who despite recent reverses still possessed a large territory and presumably did not wish to confine their claims to the kingship of Babylon or the ‘land of Sumer and Akkad’. Perhaps, then, we see here the selection and reshaping of Mesopotamian traditions in line with the priorities of the new rulers, to create a royal identity that was appropriate for both a ruler of Babylonia and a Seleucid king.

In this light, the specific parallels with Nabonidus’ titulary are intriguing. Inscriptions of this king have been excavated at Borsippa, so direct borrowing is plausible in practical terms, but would this simply reflect the epigraphic models available to the redactor, or might there also be a deliberate reference to Nabonidus as a model ruler? At first glance, the latter might seem surprising. While Alexander and his successors generally aligned themselves with rulers who had held power directly before the Persian domination,⁴⁵ Nabonidus had angered the priestly elite of Babylon through his unorthodox religious policies, and is portrayed negatively in some later Akkadian sources. On this basis it is usually assumed that he was not a positive figure in later Babylonia.⁴⁶ He might then seem an unlikely model for Seleucid self-presentation.

In fact, there is evidence that a more positive memory of Nabonidus also existed in Hellenistic Babylonia. An Akkadian chronicle written or copied in the Seleucid or Parthian period portrays him as a just and pious ruler, and he receives a relatively sympathetic treatment in Berossus’ *Babyloniaca*.⁴⁷ Beaulieu has further suggested that Nabonidus’ religious reforms were less wide-ranging than previously thought, and that they focused mainly on the temple of Esagil in Babylon.⁴⁸ If so, while he angered the priesthood of Marduk at Babylon, Nabonidus may have maintained a more positive reputation in other cities. Perhaps then, he was not an entirely negative figure, and in some respects could have served as a model for the early Seleucids. His vision of a Babylon-centred empire stretching to the Mediterranean might then provide a rather neat Babylonian frame for Seleucid imperial ambitions, which, even if they no longer encompassed the whole of Alexander’s empire, certainly extended as far as the Levantine coast.

While Antiochus may have given up hope of reconquering Macedon, he nonetheless

wished to record his Macedonian ancestry: his father Seleucus I receives the gentilic *Makkadunāya*, ‘Macedonian’. This has been frequently noted, but variously interpreted. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White suggested that the Seleucids were following Achaemenid imperial models in stressing their foreign origins,⁴⁹ while Pierre Briant, building on earlier work by André Aymard, has argued that the use of the gentilic simply reflects the desire of the Seleucids to maintain a link to their homeland.⁵⁰ Aymard and Briant align the usage of the Antiochus Cylinder with Greek dedications where the Seleucids bear the ethnic Μακεδών, and Briant suggests that ‘le souci *indéniable* du Séleucide de s’identifier au cours de la royauté babylonienne va de pair avec sa volonté de se dire Macédonien’.⁵¹ Without other Seleucid inscriptions in cuneiform, the issue cannot be resolved conclusively. Nonetheless, it may be worth suggesting another possibility, if only to underline the interpretive difficulties involved.

Whereas previous interpreters have tended to view the presence of ‘Macedonian’ as evidence of a desire to associate Seleucus with Macedonian ethnicity, it is possible that its inclusion is a secondary effect of a different concern – one related to status. A hint that this might be the case comes from the positioning of the gentilic within the titulary. ‘Macedonian’ does not occur in isolation, but after ‘king’ and just before the title ‘king of Babylon’. There are three possible interpretations of ‘lugal *Makkadunāya*’, all of which are grammatically possible:⁵² 1) ‘Macedonian king’ 2) ‘king of the Macedonians’; 3) ‘the king, the Macedonian’. Whatever the exact construction, it is hard to avoid the impression that the gentilic is qualifying or somehow explaining ‘king’. If so, the key issue may be royal status rather than ethnicity. Seleucus was not born to the Babylonian throne, but possessed a kingship which extended beyond Babylonia and which derived legitimacy from his link to Alexander and the Argead dynasty of Macedon. The phrasing of the Cylinder may then represent an attempt to express not Seleucus’ ethnicity, but the fact that he had royal status beyond the Babylonian context, in order to confer extra legitimacy upon him and his son. After all, Antiochus himself is not described as ‘Macedonian’, which we might have expected if there was a deliberate stress on his own ethnicity or that of the dynasty as a whole.

The concern to stress the royal status of one’s predecessors in other regions has good Mesopotamian and Persian precedents. Rulers of Mesopotamia sought legitimacy by citing the royal status of their predecessors, even when they had ruled different areas. Thus, Assyrian conquerors of Babylonia refer to themselves as kings of Babylon and Assyria, and their fathers as ‘king of Assyria’,⁵³ while Cyrus refers to his father and grandfather as ‘king of Anšan’.⁵⁴ While these examples can be read as stressing foreign ethnicity, it is probable that the more important issue was the claim to royal status, especially in the Cyrus Cylinder, which continues with the phrase ‘heir to an eternal line of kingship’.⁵⁵ Thus, if it is royal

status that is at issue here, *Makkadunāya* may be less of a break with tradition than it at first appears; rather, like the rest of the titulary, it may represent a combination of Mesopotamian, Persian and Seleucid royal styles.

2. Piety and power: the rebuilding of Esagil and Ezida (col. i 6–16)

This section has been thoroughly discussed with regard to the centrality of building in Babylonian kingship, and the importance of the building ceremony in which Antiochus claims to have participated; without a doubt this is a crucial legitimating move which presents him as a pious ruler in the Babylonian tradition.⁵⁶ Here, I would like to focus on a short phrase which has so far gone unremarked but which undermines the appearance of perfect traditionalism.

In col. i 6–8, we find the motivating circumstance for Antiochus' building activity: the prompting of his own heart. 'Now, my heart urged me to (re)build Esagil and Ezida ...', the section begins, and the following lines immediately shift to describe the enactment of this royal decision. At first glance there is nothing remarkable about this sentence, nor the expression with which it begins: earlier royal inscriptions too mention the urging of the ruler's heart.⁵⁷ Yet when viewed through the lens of traditional Mesopotamian royal rhetoric, the way in which the expression is used here is exceptional. Babylonian and Assyrian rulers usually took great care to present their building projects as motivated by divine will, and/or absolute necessity (i.e. the degradation of the previous structure). This was because in Mesopotamian tradition large-scale building, although a royal duty, was understood to be undertaken and realized only through divine *fiat*; there was accordingly a risk of *hubris* in grand human building projects.⁵⁸ In first-millennium sources the founder of the Akkad dynasty, Sargon I (r. 2334–2279 BC) is said to have angered the gods by building a 'new Babylon', perhaps as a veiled criticism of his namesake Sargon II of Assyria (r. 722–705 BC), who not only built a new capital, Dur-Šarrukin ('Wall of Sargon'), but boasted about it in his inscriptions as a personal achievement.⁵⁹ When Sargon II died in battle shortly after the completion of Dur-Šarrukin, the city was abandoned. Nabonidus too is presented as sacrilegious in the *Verse Account* for building temples and a palace like those of Babylon outside the Mesopotamian heartland, in Harran and the Arabian oasis of Tema.⁶⁰ It was, therefore, advisable to be careful about how one presented building, especially in the case of major structures like palaces, or temples, the homes of the gods.

Time and again the phraseology of royal inscriptions reflects this need for caution. In all except the shortest inscriptions, rulers prefaced the description of their building activities, particularly those relating to temples, with clauses emphasizing their status as the chosen (and subordinate) agent of the gods, the dilapidation of an existing building, and/or their desire to

please the deity through its restoration. Thus, Nabopolassar's work on the Babylon ziggurat receives an introduction which stresses both his divine support and the necessity of rebuilding: 'When by the word of Nabû and Marduk, who favour my sovereignty ... I conquered the Subaru, and reduced his land to a ruin heap – regarding Etemenanki, the ziggurat of Babylon, which before my time had weakened and gone to ruin ...'.⁶¹ Similarly, his son, Nebuchadnezzar, a lavish builder who perhaps had greater need for apologia than other kings, persistently stresses that temple (re)building is part of his divinely-appointed mandate on earth. One inscription states that the god Marduk 'sent me in his great power to direct the affairs of the land, to shepherd the people, to provide for the cult places, to rebuild the temples',⁶² and later presents Marduk as directly instigating Nebuchadnezzar's building programme, insofar as he 'kept urging my heart to undertake' this work.⁶³ There are cases where royal initiative is more prominent in the description of the building project, but this is always carefully framed by rhetoric which emphasizes divine sanction and/or necessity. For instance, one Nebuchadnezzar inscription states that the king decided (*libbā ublamma*) to undertake the building of a palace; the phrasing is similar to that of the Antiochus Cylinder, but it is preceded by a lengthy section establishing Nebuchadnezzar as divinely-appointed ruler and restorer, and the palace is presented as 'for the protection of Babylon'.⁶⁴ In contrast, the bald assertion of the Antiochus Cylinder, 'When my heart urged me to build Esagil and Ezida', comes directly after the titulary and is followed immediately by the enactment of the decision, with no divine actor in sight.

This short statement with its focus on royal agency does not look much like the carefully subordinated self-presentation of a traditional Babylonian ruler. Rather, it seems as if there has been a deliberate shift of focus from divine to human actor, explicable with regard to Greek cultural norms and Seleucid religious policy. From a Greek or Macedonian perspective, the construction or restoration of a temple could be unproblematically represented as the result of a human decision, and Hellenistic kings tended to emphasize, rather than downplay, their own agency, particularly when benefactions were at issue. Despite the carefully negotiated rhetoric of equality which developed between Greek cities and kings, rulers of all Hellenistic dynasties stress more or less subtly in letters and edicts their power to decide, and to enact the results of their decisions, even in matters relating to the gods. Writing in response to the Magnesians' proclamation of their festival for Artemis Leucophryene as 'crowned' and isopythian, Antiochus III states not only that he 'approves' (ἀποδεχόμεθα) the honours for the goddess, but also that he has written 'to those in authority so that the cities may also give their approval accordingly'.⁶⁵ The power of Artemis Leucophryene, it seems, will require the additional stamp of royal authority in order to gain full recognition among the cities in question. This matter-of-fact approach to the patronage of a local Greek cult, where

royal authority extends into the sphere of the deity, is somewhat reminiscent of the authoritative statement of the Antiochus Cylinder – ‘when my heart urged me ...’. It is possible, then, that the intrusion of royal agency into a space usually occupied by the gods in a Babylonian context may reflect Seleucid self-presentation and modes of religious patronage, in which the acknowledgement of a local deity might emphasize the power of the ruler as much as that of the god.

In this connection, it is worth turning back briefly to Antiochus’ titulary, where there is a potentially significant absence which matches the lack of divine legitimization in the building section. Unlike earlier rulers of Babylonia, Antiochus lacks any epithets linking him directly to Mesopotamian deities. The titulary in the building inscriptions of Neo-Babylonian kings, as well as those of Assyrian rulers of Babylonia and the *Cyrus Cylinder*, typically includes epithets which emphasized the king’s direct relationship with the gods (and hence his legitimacy). For instance, in the inscriptions excerpted in Table 1 above, Nebuchadnezzar is ‘beloved of Nabû’; Nabonidus ‘the one whom Sîn and Ningal destined for kingship while he was in his mother’s womb’; and Cyrus ‘the one whose rule Bêl (Marduk) and Nabû love’. In this light, it is striking that Antiochus has no such epithet, and it is tempting to read this together with the emphasis on human agency in the building section as evidence for specifically Seleucid input. Although Antiochus followed Babylonian tradition in presenting himself as king of Babylon and benefactor of the Babylonian temples, he may have been unwilling to link his legitimacy and agency too directly to a foreign deity or deities. In Mesopotamia, personal divine selection and support was a crucial element of a king’s legitimacy, even for those of royal blood, but Hellenistic kingship tended to lay stress on royal descent and on the individual abilities of the ruler rather than the support of particular gods. Indeed, Hellenistic kings claimed to be descended from gods, and some *became* gods themselves (although at the time the Antiochus Cylinder was written, only after death).⁶⁶ This is quite a different relationship to the divine from that cultivated by Assyrian and Babylonian kings, who were always careful to stress their subservience to ‘the great gods’ and, with a few exceptions, never claimed divine status themselves.⁶⁷ One might therefore suggest that we see in both the titulary and the building section a subtle but deliberate shift in the representation of ruler and gods, and the relationship between the two, in line with Seleucid royal ideology. Antiochus is king not because he is beloved of Nabû, but because he is great (*rabû*), powerful (*dannu*) and the son of the previous king; he rebuilt Esagil and Ezida simply because his own heart urged it.

3. *From the divine to the dynastic: the prayers to Nabû (col. i 16–ii 29)*

Further support for the idea that the Antiochus Cylinder deliberately reconfigures the relationship between deity and ruling dynasty can be found in the prayers to the god Nabû which constitute the bulk of the inscription.⁶⁸ Here, too, the impression of perfect traditionalism breaks down under close scrutiny, and once again the divergences seem to correspond closely to elements of Hellenistic royal ideology.

The imprint of Seleucid image-making is perhaps clearest in the depiction of the human figures. As has long been noted, the important place afforded to Stratonice the queen in the Antiochus Cylinder is atypical from a Babylonian perspective, but in keeping with the importance of the queen in Seleucid self-presentation.⁶⁹ The same is true of Antiochus' son and co-regent, Seleucus. Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions tended to concentrate exclusively on the ruler, his role as divine representative on earth, and his personal relationship with the deity.⁷⁰ This shift in focus from a primarily ruler-centric to a more dynastic image also helps to explain the unusual structure of the prayer section on the Antiochus Cylinder. In Mesopotamian royal inscriptions of the first millennium, each deity is invoked by name only once, no matter how long the prayer section might be or how many human actors are mentioned, so that the king's requests form a single prayer.⁷¹ Here, however, we have three separate prayers to Nabû – one for Antiochus and Seleucus, one for Antiochus himself, and finally a short one for the king, his wife and son. The introduction of other members of the royal family and the king's intercession on their behalf as well as his own constitutes a break with traditional structure and content, and it seems as if we must see here the influence of Seleucid dynastic ideology as it is typically expressed in Greek.

The increased focus on the dynastic also has repercussions in the divine sphere, although the Seleucid link here is not immediately apparent. If Stratonice and Seleucus are unusually prominent presences, another figure is less present as an actor than we might expect: the god Nabû. Babylonian royal building inscriptions usually invoke the primary deity with specific epithets which illustrate their particular qualities, but from the Antiochus Cylinder the main piece of information we are given about Nabû is – repeatedly – that he is the son of Marduk and Erua (Šarpānītu). Although it is not atypical for Mesopotamian royal inscriptions to refer to a deity's father and mother, the repetition of the genealogy is unusual, and it is made more so by the relative lack of attention to Nabû's other attributes. Apart from *igigalli ilāni*, 'wise one of the gods', a title also frequently given to his father Marduk and the god Ea, most of the other epithets applied to Nabû here are very generic, e.g. 'the proud one', 'the one who is worthy of praise'. In fact, Francesco Pomponio saw this as a possible indication that Nabû's true personality was by this time fading.⁷² However, the correction of 'sceptre' to 'writing board' in col. ii now proves that knowledge about Nabû's role as the god of writing and scholarship was still very much alive among the scholars of third-century

Borsippa. Moreover, it is difficult to explain the repeated stress on Nabû's genealogy in terms of a dearth of material available to a redactor who, as we have seen, appears to have had access to a number of previous inscriptions.

In a forthcoming article, Paul Kosmin suggests an alternative interpretation of this section, arguing that its unusual features can be understood in terms of Seleucid image-making rather than fading theology.⁷³ He suggests that the emphasis on Nabû's genealogy is intentional, and designed to set up parallels between human and divine families. Exactly what sort of parallel is being drawn, and between which actors, is more debatable. Kosmin argues for a deliberate mirroring of human divine genealogies, designed to equate Antiochus with Nabû and Seleucus I with Marduk. The linguistic argument advanced in support of this is somewhat problematic, insofar as it places great significance on the use of the Akkadian word *aplu*, 'son/heir', to describe both Antiochus and Nabû. Kosmin suggests that this is designed to equate the two, and that *aplu* was also deliberately selected to create an aural pun on the name of Apollo, alluding to the syncretism between Apollo and Nabû, and the association between Antiochus and Apollo, attested elsewhere in the Seleucid empire. However, *aplu* is the usual word for expressing the filiation of Nabû in Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions and, when applicable, for that of kings as well; it therefore seems most likely that its use here simply reflects 'standard' phrasing.⁷⁴ One might also suggest that a neater set of equations between the divine and human actors on the Cylinder would be Marduk-Antiochus, Erua-Stratonice,⁷⁵ and Nabû-Seleucus.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the overall argument that the Cylinder draws parallels between the royal and divine families is persuasive. The human dynasty of Antiochus, his wife Stratonice, and their son Seleucus finds its counterpart in the divine family of Marduk, Erua and Nabû. The move from focusing solely on the specific attributes of the primary deity to emphasizing his role as part of a divine family mirrors the shift we have seen in the mortal sphere away from a narrow spotlight on the ruler to a more dynastic framework. Just as Antiochus' wife and son feature more prominently in the inscription than was traditionally the case, so Nabû is defined by his familial relationships to a greater extent than is typical for the genre. The Seleucid dynastic model is superimposed onto the divine world.

In fact, in this section Nabû is not only less of a personality in his own right than was traditional in royal inscriptions, but also less of an agent. Only one verb of the prayer section has the god as subject; otherwise his agency is expressed more obliquely, through references to his command or writing tablet, and the verbs look forward directly to the result of the prayers for the king. Conversely, in earlier royal inscriptions, a series of imperatives and precatives usually brings the deity to the forefront of the action. The shift in tone can be illustrated by a comparison of one of the prayers from the Antiochus Cylinder with an excerpt

from Nebuchadnezzar's cylinder inscription recording his restoration of the Borsippa ziggurat.

Antiochus:

Nabû...at your steadfast command, which cannot be annulled, may my days be long, my years many; may my throne be secure, my reign long-lasting, on your sublime writing board which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth.⁷⁷

Nebuchadnezzar:

Nabû... regard my works favourably; grant to me as a gift eternal life, ripe old age, a secure throne, a long reign, the downfall of my foes and the conquest of my enemy's land. On your true writing board which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth, decree for me long life, inscribe (my) old age.⁷⁸

Antiochus' Nabû is a more distant framing presence, with the king's imagined success and wellbeing taking centre stage, whereas in the second prayer Nebuchadnezzar's Nabû is the major character, his agency emphasized in every verb. The difference in phraseology is subtle and this example should not be pressed too far, but it fits with the tendency we have noted in the titulary and building section to de-emphasize divine agency, making the king (and his family) the main focus. Moreover, if this Nebuchadnezzar inscription was a source for the redactor of the Antiochus Cylinder, as suggested above (section I) then the shift in tone would become even more significant. Here too, then, we might see Seleucid self-presentation and religious policy at work. The local deity is invoked and praised in superficially traditional terms, but at a deeper level the dynastic has encroached upon the territory of the divine.

III. The Antiochus Cylinder and Hellenistic scholarship

It seems clear from the foregoing analysis that the production of the Antiochus Cylinder does not just reflect the continuation of Babylonian tradition, with more or less royal support and involvement. Many of the text's non-traditional features can persuasively be explained with reference to Seleucid royal ideology. This in turn suggests a degree of active interchange and negotiation between the Seleucid court and the priestly and scholarly elite of Borsippa, to create a statement of royal piety and power which suited both the priests of Nabû and their ruler. The Antiochus Cylinder thus emerges as another testament to the ways in which Hellenistic kings and subject elites collaborated to create and maintain a particular royal or imperial style which was comprehensible and germane to both. Yet while this artefact is undoubtedly important for our understanding of Seleucid-Babylonian relations, it is equally important to consider what it does *not*, or cannot tell us, about Seleucid imperialism or Hellenistic Babylonian culture more broadly. Although the Cylinder is the only extant

Seleucid royal inscription in cuneiform, there exists the temptation to assume that it is representative of Seleucid imperialism throughout or even beyond Babylonia. But the degree to which this document and its contents have a significance or applicability beyond their local context is questionable. Two issues are key here: the Cylinder's apparent exceptionalism, and its intended audience.

Whether or not the Cylinder *was* the only Seleucid royal inscription in cuneiform is still an open question. No other example has been found, but many sites remain unexcavated, and Mesopotamian kings did not usually issue only single building inscriptions. The text also makes a striking number of references to the temple of Esagil in Babylon. Although the relationship between Esagil and Ezida was always close, no earlier Mesopotamian building inscription consistently links two temples together, and the repeated refrain of 'Esagil and Ezida' in the Antiochus Cylinder raises the suspicion that the text was compiled with reference to a centrally produced archetype from Babylon relating to work at Esagil. We know from the Chronicles and Astronomical Diaries that the Seleucids undertook building work at Esagil, and the sanctuary has never been fully excavated;⁷⁹ it is therefore possible that more Seleucid cylinders await discovery here, or indeed elsewhere in Babylonia. We should therefore be wary of assuming that the existence of this cylinder alone reflects a special Seleucid interest in Borsippa or its patron deity.

Perhaps the most important issue here, however, is that of audience. For whom was this text written? Who was the target of its blend of Babylonian tradition and Seleucid royal ideology? In the form that survives to us, the inscription certainly had a very limited audience in antiquity – seen perhaps only by a few scholars before it was bricked up inside the foundations of the Ezida temple. However, attempts have been made to reconstruct a wider audience, on the grounds that copies were probably retained in the temple archives, or that the composition may have been read out.⁸⁰ The argument that archive copies existed is plausible, as this was definitely the case for earlier royal inscriptions, but an extra copy or copies in the archives of Ezida would still mean a very restricted audience. On the other hand, there is no evidence that such inscriptions were read out or otherwise orally interpreted. It would be rather surprising if they were; foundation deposits were intended to be read only by the gods and any future rulers who might uncover them in the course of their own building projects. Their deposition was a ritually charged event for which only those with the relevant ritual qualifications would be in attendance. Moreover, even if there was a level of oral dissemination, there is no reason to suppose that this would have extended beyond Borsippa. On balance, it is most probable that the primary audiences were the groups who collaborated to produce the inscription: the priestly elite of Borsippa, and the king or his representatives – with the addition, at least for some of those involved in the artefact's creation, of Nabû

himself.

Even if the composition was not designed to reach a wider Babylonian or even pan-Babylonian audience, this does not necessarily preclude the possibility that it can meaningfully be analysed at a supralocal level, i.e. that its cultural and theological manoeuvres are ‘Babylonian’ rather than Borsippian, or that it bears witness to Seleucid cultural policy rather than a single transaction between one ruler’s court and a specific local elite. Indeed, it has been argued that the emphasis on Nabû in this text reflects a particular Seleucid interest in this deity. Since Apollo and Nabû were identified in the Hellenistic period, and since from the reign of Antiochus I Apollo became the Seleucids’ dynastic deity, Kyle Erickson has suggested that the Antiochus Cylinder ‘reflects the importance of Nabû as well as his role as a patron deity who supports the [Seleucid] royal house’.⁸¹ Such readings of the Cylinder, however fail to take into account the locally differentiated nature of cult in Hellenistic Babylonia, and the resulting strength of local identity, and competitiveness, among the priesthoods of different cities.

Although there was a universally recognized pantheon in Mesopotamia, different cities elevated different gods to the top of their pantheon and, as in the Greek world, not all deities were venerated equally everywhere. The variations are visible not only in temple records which attest the different sets of deities who received cult at each centre, but also in the onomastic choices of the temple elites in different cities, and the various deities which temple scholars invoked to sanction and protect their documents. At Babylon, for example, Marduk/Bēl was the chief deity, accompanied by his consort Šarpānītu/Bēltīya. Accordingly, theophoric names like Bēl-šuma-ukīn or Marduk-šuma-iddin dominate here, and scholarly texts from the city invoke Marduk and Šarpānītu in their colophons to bring success and wellbeing to the writer.⁸² In the southern city of Uruk, by contrast, the sky god Anu and his consort Antu reigned supreme over cult and onomastics: names current among elite Urukian families include Anu-bēlšunu, Anu-aḥa-ušabši and Antu-banāt, and Anu and Antu are the deities most commonly invoked in the protective formulae of scholarly colophons.⁸³ Nabû is emphasized at Borsippa, both in cult and in personal names, because he was the patron deity of the city and Ezida was his main temple. He was not, however, universally popular in Babylonia during the Hellenistic period. Due to the close relationship between Babylon and Borsippa, Nabû-names are relatively frequent at Babylon, but further south his popularity seems to have been minimal: only a handful of Nabû-names are attested in the cuneiform documentation from Seleucid Uruk, compared with thousands of attestations of Anu- or Antu-based names,⁸⁴ and scholarly texts from the city do not invoke this god in their prayer or curse formulae. In fact, Nabû may not even have received cult at Uruk in this period.⁸⁵ If the Seleucids *did* co-opt Nabû as patron, therefore, this would be a remarkable gesture of

favouritism towards Borsippa and its priesthood, rather than an act which could be expected to secure the support of elites across Babylonia (or beyond). These considerations suggest that the theology of the Antiochus Cylinder is more Borsippian than Babylonian, and imply a locally centred reading of the inscription.

Further support for such a reading can be found in two Akkadian building inscriptions from Seleucid Uruk which, although they are not cast in the voice of the king, explicitly or implicitly claim a relationship with the Seleucid royal house. Dated to 244 and 202 BC respectively, these inscriptions record building work on the city's main temple, the Rēš (the temple of Anu and Antu) by two different governors of the city from the same local family, who were both named Anu-uballit.⁸⁶ The content and phrasing of both inscriptions are highly traditional except that, like the Antiochus Cylinder, they both contain a date, and that each governor also bears a Greek name in addition to his Akkadian name – in the first case Nikarchos, in the second, Kephalon. Anu-uballit/Nikarchos claims explicitly in his inscription that his 'second name' was given to him by 'king Antiochus' (probably II).⁸⁷ Both Anu-uballits state that they carried out the building work 'for the life of' their respective Seleucid rulers (Nikarchos for Antiochus II and his son Seleucus; Kephalon for Antiochus III). It is debatable to what extent these inscriptions testify to royal investment in Uruk and its cults, as opposed to local initiative and resources, although it seems unlikely that this important Urukean family, several of whose members sported Hellenistic royal names (Alexander, Antiochus, Seleucus, Antiochis) had no relationship to the Seleucid court or its representatives.⁸⁸ At the very least, however, these inscriptions illustrate the terms in which the Urukean elite wished to construct such a relationship – terms which are different from, but parallel to, what we have found at Borsippa. Just as the Antiochus Cylinder focuses on Nabû and his temple at Borsippa, the inscriptions from Uruk focus on the patron deities of Uruk and their temple, the Rēš. There is no mention here of Nabû, and Antiochus (II) 'king of the lands' is linked instead to Anu and Antu. Similarly, while the Antiochus Cylinder reads as if the Seleucid empire had Borsippa (and Babylon) at its heart, Anu-uballit-Kephalon's inscription makes Uruk the centre: whereas Antiochus I brings bricks from 'Hatti' to lay the foundations of Ezida in Borsippa, Anu-uballit-Kephalon brings cedars from the 'mighty mountain Mahdaru' to roof the shrines of Uruk 'for the life of' Antiochus III.⁸⁹

Whether or not there was any royal involvement in the restoration programme at the Rēš, the Uruk inscriptions highlight the local priorities and pride of the civic nobility in this southern Babylonian metropolis, and make it clear that the Antiochus Cylinder from Borsippa would not have appealed to 'the Babylonian elite' as a whole. If any degree of Seleucid involvement or support does lie behind the phrase 'for the life of' and the claim of royal name-giving, as seems quite plausible, then these three inscriptions taken together constitute

positive evidence that the Seleucids, like their Mesopotamian predecessors, dealt with the Babylonian priestly elites on a city-by-city basis, supporting local autonomy in religious matters and patronizing different cults in different cities. We are back to a reading of the Antiochus Cylinder which emphasizes the local.

IV. Conclusions

Where does all this leave us? Of course, since the Antiochus Cylinder is so far a unique artefact and its inscription a unique text, all conclusions must, to some degree, remain speculative. Nevertheless, several points emerge. Perhaps most importantly, from the perspective of Babylonian scholarship this is not a truly traditional composition, and some of the non-traditional features of the inscription do seem to indicate the influence of Seleucid royal ideology. The composition of the royal titulary, the presentation of royal decision-making, the prominence of the royal family, and the shift in balance between royal and divine agency all suggest that the inscription was created by someone with knowledge of how the Seleucids saw themselves and/or wished to be seen. These elements support the idea that the Antiochus Cylinder is a product of collaboration between the Borsippa elite and the Seleucid authorities, and that messages about Seleucid rule are inscribed within its traditionalizing framework and *topoi*.

The correct identification and interpretation of these messages, however, depends on situating the Cylinder accurately within its intellectual and cultural context, and on an appreciation of its limitations as a source for Hellenistic historians. Here, it is crucial to take account of the probable history, or perhaps better, genealogy of the text. The strong parallels with earlier inscriptions and the irregularities where copied phrases or motifs do not sit easily in their context combine to suggest a composite text which is at least partly stitched together from earlier examples of the genre. Although this does not necessarily indicate an incompetent composer or copyist, it does make it problematic to analyse the text at a very fine-mesh level and read subtle messages into individual textual elements, at least without thorough reference to the large corpus of previous building inscriptions from Mesopotamia. We must analyse the Antiochus Cylinder with caution, bearing in mind that some of its traditional *and* non-traditional features may derive from its sources and its method of composition.

If it is important not to overlook the text's relation to the Mesopotamian past, it is also important to situate it accurately within its Hellenistic present. Insofar as the Cylinder's representation of kingship is consistent with elements of royal ideology which we also see expressed in other parts of the Seleucid empire, it can meaningfully be described as a

Seleucid imperial text. Yet despite its universalizing rhetoric, its version of Seleucid imperialism is also locally constructed and locally targeted, as becomes clear when we set its theology against that expressed by contemporary cuneiform texts from Uruk and Babylon. This suggests that we should read the Cylinder primarily in terms of the relationship between the Seleucid court and the priestly elite of Borsippa, and be cautious about extrapolating from its focus on Nabû – natural in the god’s home city – to a more general ‘Babylonian’ or ‘imperial’ religious policy.

This might seem a disappointing conclusion from a broader Hellenistic perspective, insofar as it ‘demotes’ the Cylinder to a ‘local’ document. Yet it is in its localism that the Antiochus Cylinder arguably has the most significance for our understanding of Seleucid Babylonia, and perhaps also the broader Hellenistic world. If the reading presented here is correct, then it suggests that Seleucid role-playing in Babylonia was rather more local than has so far been appreciated. Historically, Babylonia was, like the Greek heartland, a world of cities, and although these cities, like the Greek *poleis*, shared many religious and cultural traditions, each also had its own cultic and cultural identities and practices. This local variety continued into the Hellenistic period.⁹⁰ It is even reflected in later Classical sources: the different ‘schools’ of Chaldaeans mentioned by Strabo correspond to two of Babylonia’s prominent cultural and intellectual centres, Borsippa and Uruk.⁹¹ The priestly elites of Babylonia’s principal cities cultivated a strong sense of their own uniqueness and importance – and the Antiochus Cylinder suggests that the Seleucids supported and participated in this process. Although its Borsippa-centric theology does not give us a pan-Babylonian model of Seleucid imperial ideology and behaviour, the Antiochus Cylinder is, I would suggest, all the more interesting as evidence that the complex processes of negotiation between the local, the panhellenic and the imperial which are so eloquently attested in the epigraphic record of the Greek *poleis* find their parallel in the cities of Babylonia. To return to the theatrical metaphor often employed of Hellenistic kingship, the chameleon kings⁹² of the Hellenistic world played not just to Greeks and Babylonians, but to Athenians, Antiochenes, Borsippans, Urukeans and countless other local audiences, constantly adjusting their performances in collaboration with their various constituents and interlocutors. ‘Nabû, supreme heir, upon your entry to Ezida, the true house’ – runs the final prayer of Antiochus – ‘may the good fortune of Antiochus, king of the lands, king Seleucus his son, and Stratonice, his consort, the queen ... be established by your mouth’.⁹³ The dynastic emphasis is Seleucid, the language Babylonian, the theology Borsippan. The combination, with all its tensions and disjunctions, is Hellenistic.

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Abbreviations

BCHP = I. Finkel and R. J. van der Spek, *Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period* (forthcoming; online editions at <http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/chron00.html>)

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¹ V R 66 (Rawlinson and Pinches (1884) No. 66 = BM 36277). Copies: Strassmaier (1882) 139–42 and

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² Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991).

³ Haubold (2013) 135–42; Strootman (2013); Kosmin (forthcoming).

⁴ Haubold (2013) 141.

⁵ Stevens (2012).

⁶ *inūma* here is usually interpreted as the subordinating conjunction ‘when’, but this creates grammatical difficulties: if the subordinate construction ends with *ublam-ma*, the connective particle *-ma* at the end of the clause is unexpected; if it extends to *albin-ma* or *ub(b)il*, then these verbs should have the subordinative marker *-u* (not required in *ublam-ma*, because of ventive *-am*). I have retained the standard translation, but it is also possible that *inūma* here is in fact to be understood as the temporal adverb which CAD I/J s.v. *inūma* and AHW 384 render as ‘now, then’, ‘damals’, in which case there would be no syntactic error. Since adverbial *inūma* is well attested in Assyrian inscriptions, this could be an Assyrianism in the Antiochus Cylinder – see below, section II.1 (although Neo-Babylonian examples also occur).

⁷ See pp. 4–5 below for analysis of these two lines.

⁸ The person responsible for the inscription as it has survived to us and the person(s) responsible for the content of the text may or may not be the same. Part or all of the inscription may have been copied from an archetype or created by a single individual (for some signs that the former is more likely, see below, section III). To cover this ambiguity, I use ‘redacted’ rather than ‘composed’ or ‘written’, and ‘redactor’ rather than ‘composer’, ‘writer/author’ or ‘scribe’ when discussing the content of the text.

⁹ Berger (1973) 92–4; Da Riva (2008) 27–8.

¹⁰ Frame (1995) B.6.33.4, 9. The inscription survives on two foundation cylinders now in the British Museum. One is unprovenanced; the other is recorded as coming from Rassam’s excavations at Sippar, but Frame (1995: 254) suggests that this may be erroneous since the content relates solely to Borsippa.

¹¹ Worthington (2012) 146–54.

¹² Seux (1976) 525 with n. 2; Foster (2005) 866 (§1).

¹³ Seux (1976) 525 n. 2.

¹⁴ Langdon (1912) 64 col. iii 36–8 (Nabopolassar).

¹⁵ Langdon (1912) 68: 40 (Nabopolassar).

¹⁶ See below, section II.3.

¹⁷ Seux (1976) 525, n. 8; Stol and van der Spek:

www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/antiochus_cylinder/antiochus_cylinder2.html#ii.15.

¹⁸ Langdon (1912) 100 col. ii 23–4; Schaudig (2001) 2.10^a ii 23–4. The Nebuchadnezzar cylinders record restorations to the ziggurat; the Nabonidus cylinder relates to work on the Ezida temple.

¹⁹ Langdon (1912) 214 col. ii 33–6 (Neriglissar).

²⁰ Langdon (1912) 100 col. ii 23–5 (Nebuchadnezzar).

²¹ Schaudig (2001) 2.4 II 9–10 (Nabonidus).

²² Worthington (2012) 146–52.

²³ E.g. Schaudig (2001) 116–9 (errors in the inscriptions of Nabonidus).

²⁴ It should also be noted that the inscription contains many erasures, and that the rulings between lines are executed clumsily, with multiple strokes – unexpected in a high-level piece of cuneiform scholarship.

²⁵ E.g. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991) 83; Briant (1994) 459–63; Strootman (2013) 88.

²⁶ Haubold (2013) 136–7; Kosmin (forthcoming).

²⁷ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991) 83–4; Kosmin (forthcoming).

²⁸ Kosmin (forthcoming).

²⁹ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991) 78; Haubold (2013) 135–7, 139–40; Kosmin (forthcoming).

³⁰ Cf. Seux (1967) for royal epithets of all periods; for epithets of Neo-Babylonian kings see Berger (1973) 72–82 and Da Riva (2008) 99–107. The first to use the title *zānin Esagil u Ezida* is the Neo-Assyrian king Sargon II (Seux (1967) 372–3). All Neo-Babylonian kings are known to have used the title except Neriglissar, who in his few surviving royal inscriptions uses the similar *muddiš Esagil u Ezida*, ‘restorer of Esagil and Ezida’ (Langdon (1912) 208 Nr 1: 2; 218 Nr 3: 2).

³¹ On *šar mātāti* see Harmatta (1971) 221; Boiy (2002) 244–5. This title may be Urartian in origin

(Wilhelm (1986) 106–11; Seidl (1994) 114). For *šar mātāti šarḫu* see Seux (1967) 316.

³² Seux (1967) 298–300 (*šarru rabū*); 293–6 (*šarru dannu*); 308–12 (*šar kiššati* – used of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II in economic documents and a colophon, but not in royal inscriptions).

³³ Jursa (2007).

³⁴ Harmatta (1971) 223.

³⁵ Harmatta (1971) 224; Beaulieu (1989) 143.

³⁶ Harmatta (1971). On the Cyrus Cylinder, see further Kuhrt (1983) and Schaudig (2001), with bibliography.

³⁷ Cylinder recording restoration of the temple of Ninmah, Babylon: Frame (1995) B.6.32.5, 1–3.

³⁸ Cylinder recording the restoration of the Borsippa ziggurat: Langdon (1912) 98 col. i 1–4. The epithets of Nebuchadnezzar and their ordering are variable throughout his large corpus of inscriptions, but none to my knowledge contain a higher number of correspondences with the titles of Antiochus.

³⁹ Cylinder recording the restoration of the temple of Sîn in Harran: Schaudig (2001) 2.12, col. i 1–3.

⁴⁰ Cyrus Cylinder, recording building work on the walls of Babylon: Schaudig (2001) K2.1: 20.

⁴¹ E.g. Kuhrt (1987) 56; Haubold (2013) 172–6; Dillery (2013); Kosmin (forthcoming).

⁴² Specific to Nebuchadnezzar are the epithets *rē'û kīnu* ‘true shepherd’, *emqu* ‘wise’ (often in the phrase *emqu mutnennû* ‘wise, prayerful one’), and *iūt kûn libbi DN* or *mīgir DN*, ‘chosen by the steadfast heart of/pleasing to DN’ (usually Nabû or Marduk). We might have expected the redactor to select these (assuming he was familiar with them) if he intended a link to this particular king.

⁴³ On the Hellenistic ‘warrior king’, see Chanotis (2005) 57–78.

⁴⁴ On the treaty with the Mauryans, see Karttunen (1997) 160–4.

⁴⁵ See Moyer (2011) 87–8 on the favourable position adopted by Alexander and the early Ptolemies towards the last native Egyptian dynasty (the 30th Dynasty) especially the last ruler, Nectanebo II.

⁴⁶ On Nabonidus’ reign and religious policies, see Beaulieu (1989).

⁴⁷ Chronicle: Lambert (1968–9); Machinist and Tadmor (1993) 149–51; Schaudig (2001) P4; Glassner (2005) No. 53. Berossus: *BNJ* 680 F9a. In Berossus’ account Nabonidus rebuilds the walls of Babylon like a good king, and is treated ‘humanely’ (φιλανθρώπως) by Cyrus after his capture.

⁴⁸ Beaulieu (1989) 219–20.

⁴⁹ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991) 83.

⁵⁰ Briant (1994) 459–63, with Aymard (1950).

⁵¹ Aymard (1950) 67–8; Briant (1994) 462. Tarn (1909) used the Greek evidence to make the opposite case, arguing that the ethnic Μακεδών was ‘adopted as a mark of distinction by those kings who reigned over Orientals’ (269).

⁵² Recent translations have tended to take the third option, i.e. ‘the king, the Macedonian’. ‘King of the Macedonians’, although favoured by some (e.g. Lehmann-Haupt (1905) 248–9; Boiy (2002) 248) has been rejected by others on the grounds that the Akkadian *Makkadunāya* is not marked as plural, and that there is no evidence that Seleucus ever took the Greek title βασιλεὺς Μακεδόνων to which it would be equivalent (Aymard (1950) 67–8; Briant (1994) 461–2). However, lack of explicit plural marking is possible with gentilics (Sargon), while the lack of evidence for Seleucus being described as βασιλεὺς Μακεδόνων in Greek sources is inconclusive since there is no reason why a Babylonian redactor could not have coined such an expression independently – it is not impossible in Akkadian for ‘king of’ to be followed by a gentilic rather than a geographic name (cf. CAD Š² s.v. *šarru* 1a 2’). This reading therefore cannot be completely ruled out.

⁵³ E.g. Sennacherib, Assurbanipal.

⁵⁴ Schaudig (2001) K2.1 21; note that when Cyrus describes his selection by Marduk earlier in the inscription he refers to himself as ‘king of Anšan’ (line 12), but this is dropped in the final titulary.

⁵⁵ Schaudig (2001) K2.1 22.

⁵⁶ Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991) 79–81.

⁵⁷ E.g. Langdon (1912) 118 col. iii 12–15; 194 col. ii 15–16 (both Nebuchadnezzar); Schaudig (2001) 2.17 II’ 6’ (partly restored); 2.26a II 8.

⁵⁸ On temple-building as a duty of Mesopotamian kings which is presented in literary texts and inscriptions as dependent on divine ordinance and support, see for the late third and early second millennia Brisch (2011) 715–17, and for the Neo-Babylonian period Waerzeggers (2011) 726–31.

⁵⁹ Van De Mieroop (1999).

⁶⁰ Schaudig (2001) P1 col. ii 4–17; 28–9. The *Verse Account* is a pro-Persian verse text describing the end of Nabonidus’ reign and Cyrus’ conquest; see further n. 64.

⁶¹ Langdon (1912) 60 col. i 23–35.

⁶² Langdon (1912) 72 col. i 11–15.

⁶³ Langdon (1912) 76 col. ii 54–iii 2.

⁶⁴ Langdon (1912) 118 col. iii 12–13. Similar considerations apply to a passage in the *Persian Verse Account* (Schaudig (2001) P1 VI 8’-11’) – not itself a royal inscription, but perhaps to be linked to the Persian court. Here, Cyrus’ heart urges him (*libbašu ublamma*) to undertake building work on the walls of Babylon. Although this initially looks like a declaration of royal agency similar to the Antiochus passage, Cyrus’ decision follows several stanzas which establish him as a righteous and reverent ruler, one who ‘constantly prostrated himself [before the] gods’ (VI 6’).

⁶⁵ Welles (1934) No. 31: 22–8.

⁶⁶ Chanotis (2003) provides a useful introduction to the development and forms of Hellenistic ruler cult.

⁶⁷ On divine kingship in Mesopotamia, see Brisch (2013) with bibliography.

⁶⁸ Note that the disproportionate space taken up by the prayers is not because the prayers are particularly long by Babylonian standards; rather, it is due to the exceptionally short narrative section recording the royal building.

⁶⁹ E.g. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991) 83–5, who also see Mesopotamian antecedents here.

⁷⁰ Da Riva (2008) 109. There are a few exceptions. Nabopolassar and Nabonidus both referred to the crown prince(s) in their inscriptions, while the Cyrus Cylinder includes Cyrus’ son Cambyses in the invocation of the gods (Schaudig (2001) K2.1 27, 35). However, no earlier cuneiform royal inscription affords the same prominence to other members of the royal family, and there is no parallel for the differentiated prayers for different members of the dynastic group.

⁷¹ Sometimes there are multiple invocations to different deities and/or objects (e.g. buildings which are supposed to speak well of the builder before the god), or the deity is asked to intercede for different individuals, but each divine actor is invoked only once.

⁷² Pomponio (1978) 106.

⁷³ Kosmin (forthcoming).

⁷⁴ In other types of text *aplu* is used as a synonym for *māru*, the general word for ‘son’, but in royal inscriptions it seems to retain its primary meaning of ‘heir/eldest son’ (CAD A² s.v. aplu 2) – for instance, Nebuchadnezzar II, the only Neo-Babylonian ruler who was the legitimate heir to his father, uses it consistently. If there is a deliberate desire to equate Nabû and Apollo throughout the inscription, one might also ask why the phrasing of Nabû’s filiation is different at col. ii 5, where *bukru* is used instead.

⁷⁵ The argument that Stratonice is being equated with Ištar/Astarte here, and that the Akkadian rendering of her name (*Astartanikku*) contains a deliberate reference to the goddess Astarte/Ištar/Aphrodite (Del Monte (1997) 41–2) is problematic. First, if there was a deliberate reference to Ištar or Astarte we would expect a spelling with *š* in keeping with Akkadian or Aramaic versions of her name, whereas the Antiochus Cylinder spells Stratonice’s name with the sign *as*, not *aš*. Secondly, because of the way Semitic languages and the cuneiform script deal with consonant clusters, the spelling *As-tar-ta* may be less significant than it appears at first. Cuneiform signs are either VC, CV or CVC, and so consonant clusters such as *-str-* which never appeared in Sumerian or Akkadian words had to be represented in the script using purely orthographic vowels. *As-tar-ta* is a standard way of dealing with such a consonant group; an alternative, *As-ta-rat-*, is attested in a cuneiform rendering of Στρατονίκη (Sachs and Hunger (1989) -253B, Obv. A₁11; B₁6’), and one can also compare the transliterations of Στράτων as ^m*is-sa-ru-ú-tu-nu*, ^m*is-si-ra-ti-nu* and ^m*is-si-ra-tu-ú-nu* in documents from Uruk (BRM 2, 40: r.17; MacKenzie Art Gallery 83-31.80: r.14; VS 15, 14: r.8). It is difficult to go beyond the exigencies of transliteration and see a definite association between Ištar/Astarte and Stratonice here. The idea that there is also a deliberate play on the Akkadian noun *nīku*, giving a meaning ‘Astarte-sex’ (Kosmin (forthcoming)) also raises difficulties. Akkadian *nīku* and related words have negative connotations; *nīku* means not just ‘sex’ but ‘adultery, illicit intercourse, fornication’ (CAD N¹ s.v. nāku; N² s.v. nīku). One might ask whether such a pun would be felt appropriate in a royal inscription.

⁷⁶ Strootman (2013) 89–90 states the equivalences in this way, although earlier in the same paragraph he seems to align Nabû with Antiochus and Marduk with Seleucus along the same lines as Kosmin.

⁷⁷ BM 36277 col. ii 4–15.

⁷⁸ Langdon (1912) 98–100 col. ii 16–25.

⁷⁹ E.g. *BCHP* 6 obv. 7’–8’ (Seleucids clearing rubble from Esagil); Sachs and Hunger (1988) -273 rev. 38’–9’ (making of bricks for Esagil, 274 BC) – for other references see Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991) 81–2. If Horowitz (1991) is correct to argue that a fragmentary reference to a ritual in a Diary for 270–69 BC relates to temple restorations at Esagil, this would support the impression given by the Cylinder that Esagil and Ezida were both being restored in the late 270s or early 260s BC.

⁸⁰ E.g. Kosmin (forthcoming).

⁸¹ Erickson (2011) 56.

⁸² The preference at Babylon for Marduk/Bēl and Šarpānītu/Bēltiya in names and invocations is clear in scholarly colophons from the city: see e.g. Hunger (1968) nos. 141–190 (invocations in 146, 148, 161, 167, 169, 170, 182).

⁸³ See Hunger (1968) nos. 87–118 for the predominance of Anu and Antu in names and colophon invocations at Seleucid Uruk (Anu and Antu rose to the top of the Uruk pantheon in the late first millennium).

⁸⁴ Many attestations will refer to the same individual, and well-attested individuals will skew the statistics, but the disparity is still huge.

⁸⁵ cf. Robson (forthcoming) chs. 5–6.

⁸⁶ 1) Clay cylinder of Anu-uballit/Nikarchos: *YOS* I 52; Falkenstein (1941) 4–5. 2) Stamped brick inscriptions of Anu-uballit/Kephalon: Falkenstein (1941), 6–7, with corrections in van Dijk (1962) 47. Discussions of both: Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1993) 150–5; Clancier (2011) 759.

⁸⁷ *YOS* I 52 obv. 2–3.

⁸⁸ Clancier (2011) 759–61 takes an optimistic view; Robson (forthcoming) is more pessimistic. For the family tree(s) of the Ahi’utu family, including members with Greek names, see Doty (1988), with Boiy (2005).

⁸⁹ The location of this mountain is unknown (the reading of the name is uncertain), but the *topos* is one of bringing resources from afar.

⁹⁰ Beaulieu (2010) stresses the persistence of local scholarly traditions in the later first millennium, showing that scholarship at Uruk differs from Babylon in the degree of Assyrian influence as well as in some of the types of texts produced.

⁹¹ Strabo 16.1.6–7.

⁹² cf. Ma (2003) 179.

⁹³ BM 36277 col. ii 21–29.